



Effective Communication Between Parents and Teachers

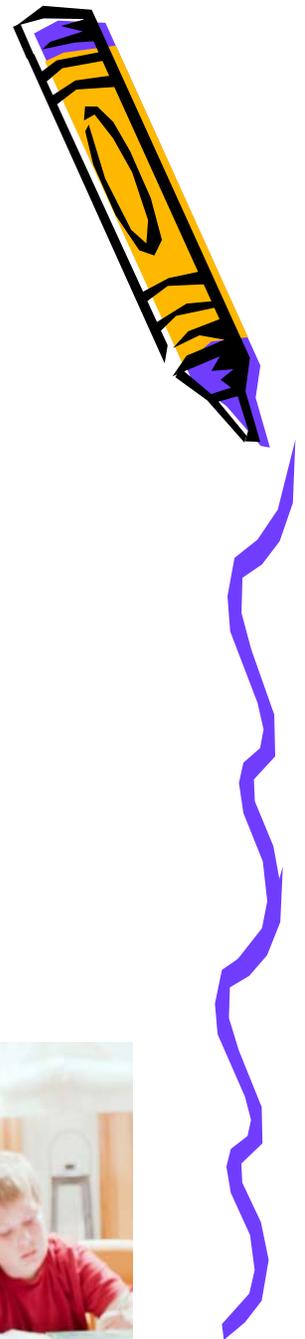
Center for Assessment and Intervention
Fischler School of Education and Human services
Nova Southeastern University

The Importance of Parental Involvement

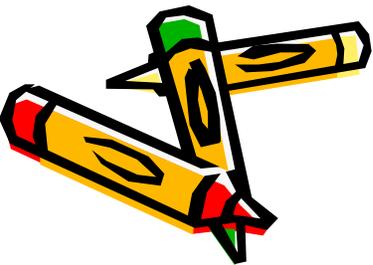
- Parents can support schools by knowing what changes are occurring in school practices and instruction.
- Parents that are not informed cannot participate fully in schools.
- Parents who know their children best, are in the best position to inform schools about their children's needs and capacities, and are deeply invested in their children's success.
- Parents that are partially informed must rely on the media and politicians to inform them and neither knows teaching and learning as well as education professionals.



The Importance of Parental Involvement

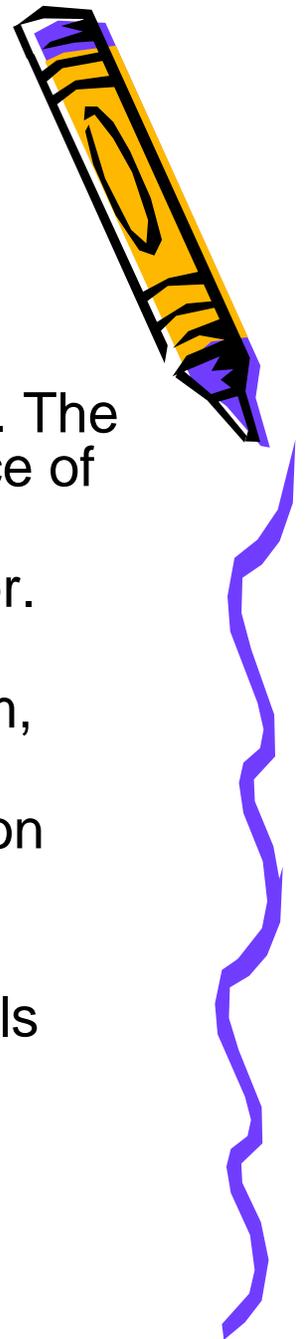


“Nobody wants his or her child to feel frustrated. No parent wishes that. But sometimes it is hard to help at home. You don’t know how the teacher does it. I always hear from my grandson, “That’s not how my teacher wants me to do it.” I want to help him at home the way he’s doing in school, but it’s not easy”.—Parent



King & Goodwin (2002)

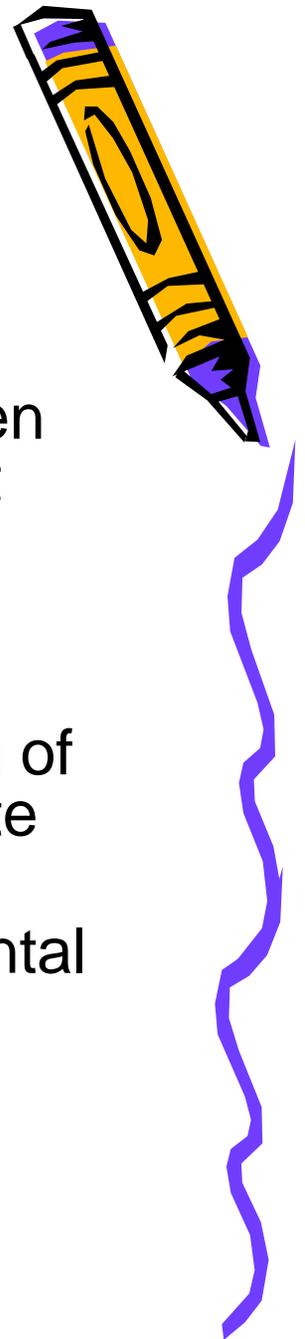
Importance of Parental Involvement



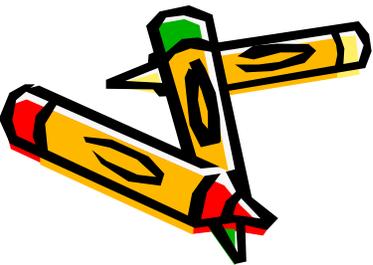
- Parental involvement enhances academic performance. The more intensely the parent is involved, the greater chance of academic success.
- Parental involvement leads to better classroom behavior.
- A parent's interest/encouragement can affect a child's attitude towards school, classroom conduct, self-esteem, and motivation.
- Parents should stay involved in their children's education from preschool through high school.
- Training and resources can help parents get involved.
- Reading together at home greatly improves reading skills



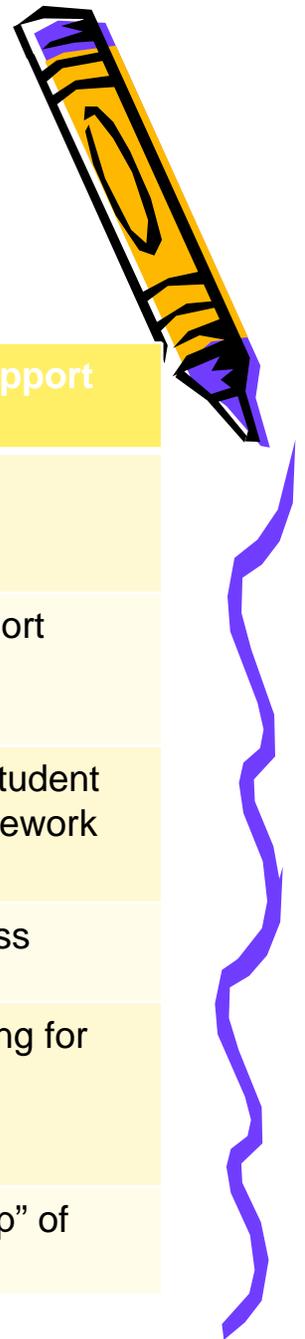
Importance of Parental Involvement



- Significant involvement most likely develops when schools actively seek out ways for parents to get involved.
- Parental involvement lifts teacher morale.
- Parental involvement benefits both children and parents. Parents will gain a better understanding of school curriculum and activities and communicate better with their children.
- Time constraints are the greatest barrier to parental involvement. Collaborate with the teacher to find ways to work around schedules.



Examples of Expectations of Parental Involvement by Teachers, Counselors, and School Administrators (Zarate, 2007)



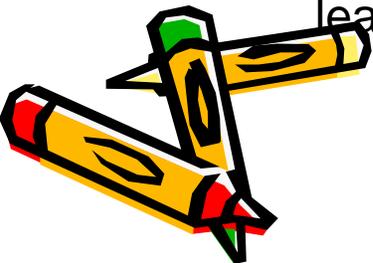
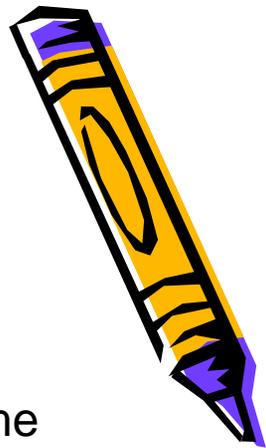
School Leadership	Administrative Support	Parenting	Academic Support
Participation in school committees	Sewing curtain for a classroom	Monitoring attendance	Helping with homework
PTA membership	Attending and staffing at school events	“Controlling kids”/behavioral monitoring	Reviewing report cards
Student advocacy	Fundraising	Emotional support	Making sure student complete homework
Community Activism	Monitoring the gate	Authoritative parenting	Observing class
	Preparing food for events	Offering entertainment as a reward or incentive	Seeking tutoring for their children
			“Staying on top” of things



National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

(<http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/standards/index.asp>):

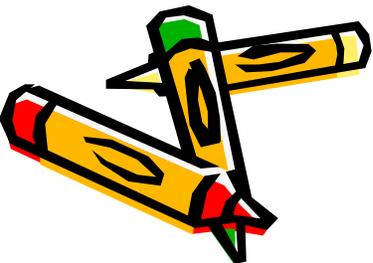
- **Standard I: Communicating** - Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- **Standard II: Parenting** - Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- **Standard III: Student Learning** - Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- **Standard IV: Volunteering** - Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- **Standard V: School Decision Making and Advocacy** - Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- **Standard V I: Collaborating with Community** - Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.



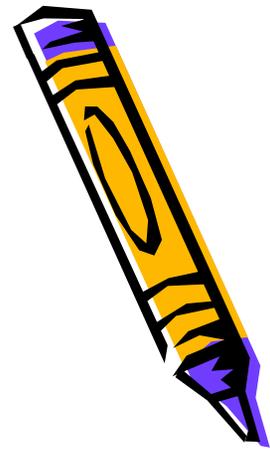
Barriers to Parental Involvement



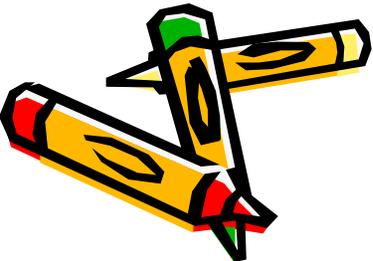
- Economic and Time Constraints: May occur for both parents and teachers. Provide information on the best way and time to be contacted.
- Interpersonal Skills: Consciously demonstrate good interpersonal skills as this may greatly hinder the parent/teacher relationship. Let the teacher know you want what is best for your child, as teachers generally want the same for your child.
- Teachers sometimes view parents as distant and threatening so it is good to stay involved and show your efforts to work as a team with the teacher.



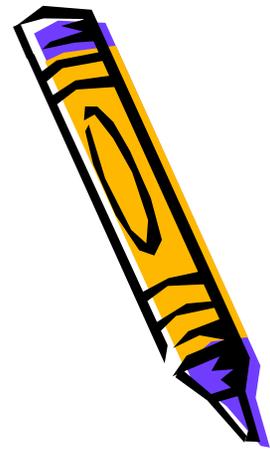
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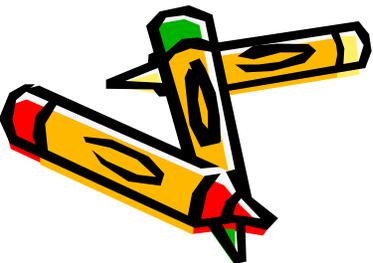
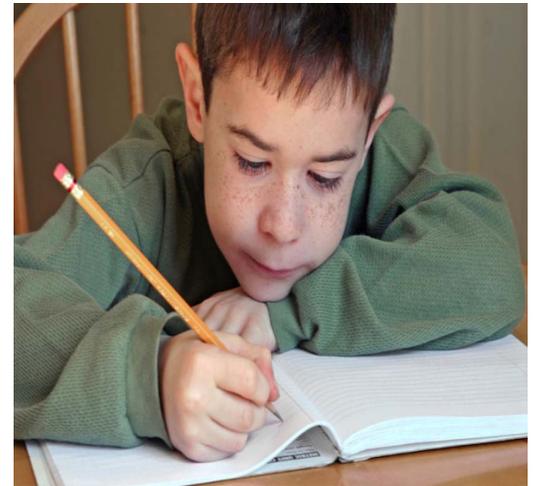
- Teacher reluctance (Bechler, 1986)
 - Role uncertainty
 - Balancing concern for group of children against more personalized concern for each individual child
 - Too much time/resources
- Lower-income, minority, and non-English speaking persons are usually underrepresented in parent involvement activities (Fager & Brewster, 1999)
- Cultural beliefs about roles in education:
 - African American and Hispanic families may view teachers as professionals “in charge” of their child’s education and may not see it as their role to be actively involved.



Barriers to Parental Involvement



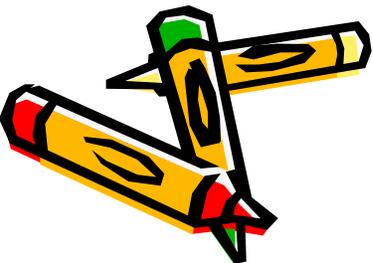
- Zarate (2007) outlined several perceived challenges to parental involvement noted by Hispanic parents:
 - Providing homework assistance
 - Communicating with schools
 - Work demands
 - School Policies



Let's See What You Know!



- It's good to wait until the teacher has come to you with a problem or concern regarding your child.
 - a) True
 - b) False
- Which of the following is a barrier to communication between teachers and parents?
 - a) Poor Interpersonal Skills
 - b) Being open to feedback
 - c) Showing understanding and empathy
 - d) Establishing trust in one another

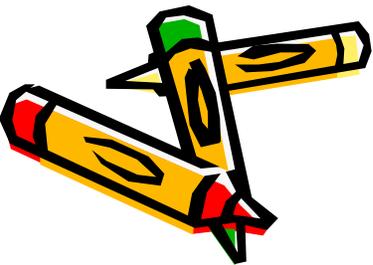


Check Your Answers!

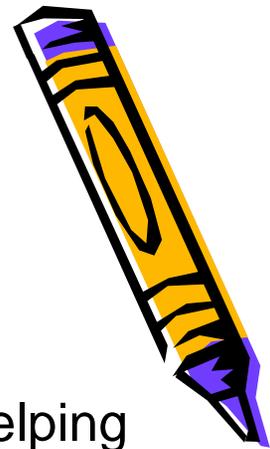
(correct answers are italicized)



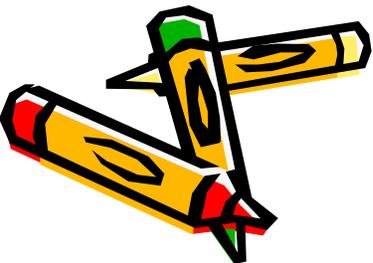
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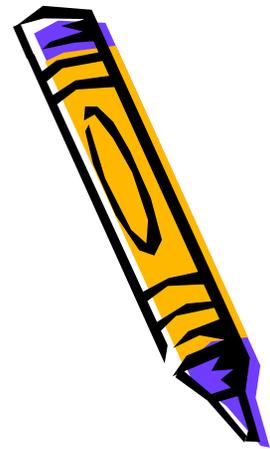
The Parent/Teacher Relationship



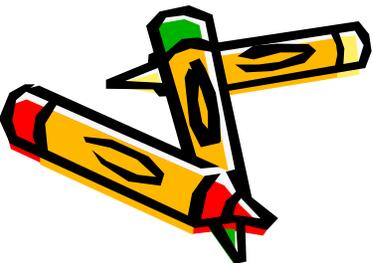
- Establishing a parent/teacher relationship is essential in helping children succeed in school
- Factors needed to establish a good relationship
 - Communication
 - Good interpersonal skills
 - Openness
 - Empathy
 - Understanding



Communication



- **One-way**
 - Newsletters: Used to share information to parents and a community
 - School to Home Notebook: Communication books to share information with parents, specifically used for students with specific learning needs
 - Alternate day or twice weekly home notes: Used to engage and update parents on their child's progress
 - Report cards: Traditional mode to convey written, evaluative information of student progress.



REPORT CARD				
GRADING PERIOD	1	2	3	4
READING	A			
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION	A			
MATHEMATICS	C			
SCIENCE/HEALTH	B			
SOCIAL STUDIES	B			
ART	A			
MUSIC	A			
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	C			
Grade Average	B			
Attendance:	4/8			
Present				
Absent				
Tardy	1			
A = Excellent • B = Good • C = Satisfactory • N = Needs Improvement U = Unsatisfactory • I = Insufficient / Incomplete				
Student:		Grade:		Year:

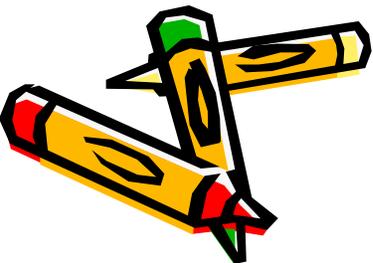




Communication

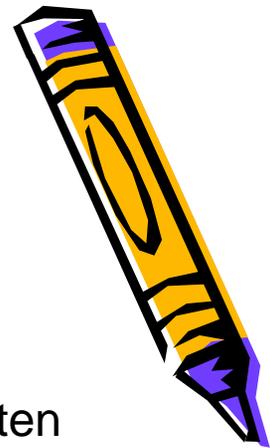


- **Two-Way:** When teachers and parents dialogue together; however, usually occurs when concerns are noted about the child. “Effective dialogue develops out of a growing trust, a mutuality of concern, and an appreciation of contrasting perspectives” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004).
 - Phone call: Best way to contact the teacher. Making the initial phone call will open the lines of communication with teachers.
 - Parent-Teacher Conference: Can create a successful partnership so both parent and teachers are on the same page. Discussion can occur and avoid blame by taking a solution-focused approach.
 - Follow-up after Parent-Teacher conferences to plan specific strategies if needed or discuss further with other teachers.

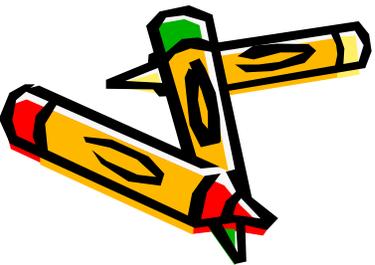




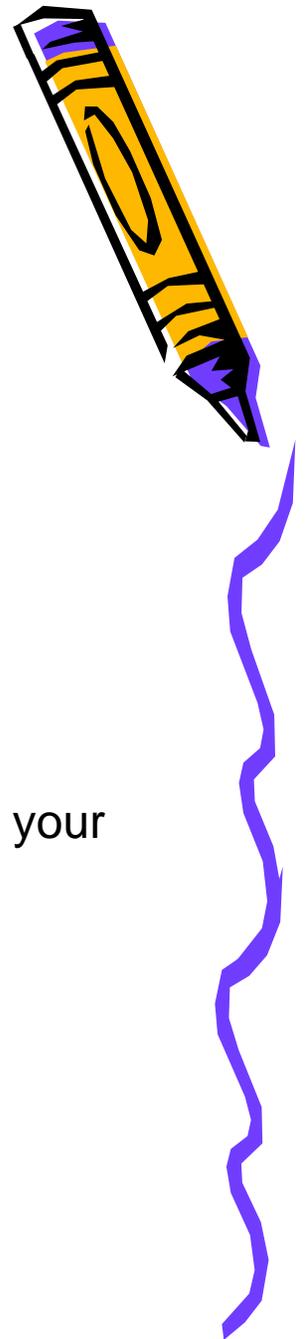
Communication



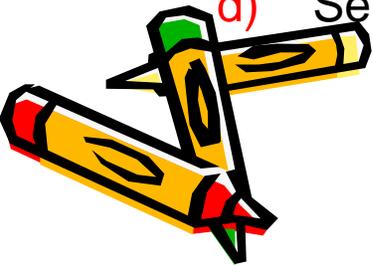
- Newer, more advanced forms of communication are available. Often times, these forms of communication allows both parents and teachers to communicate without the limitation of school hours or location.
 - Voice Mail
 - Video Technology
 - School Websites
 - Email
- If these means are not available to you as a parent, make this known to the teacher, especially if it is the main mode of communication.
- Communication between home and school helps a teacher know a student better, which in turn helps the teacher know the student better to teacher more effectively.



Let's see what you know!

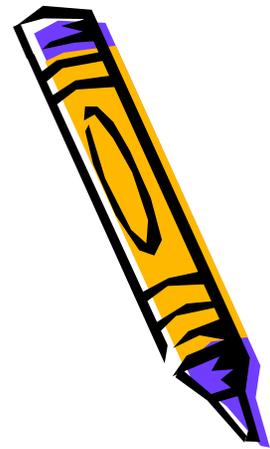


- Which of the following is not a factor needed to establish a good relationship?
 - a) Communication
 - b) Good Interpersonal Skills
 - c) Gift Giving
 - d) Empathy
- Which of the following is the best way to make initial contact with your child's teacher?
 - a) Email
 - b) Telephone Call
 - c) Parent/Teacher Conference
 - d) Sending a Letter

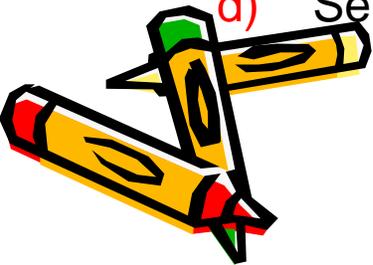


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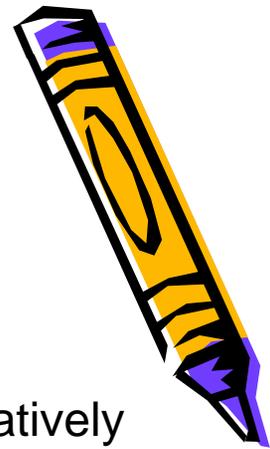
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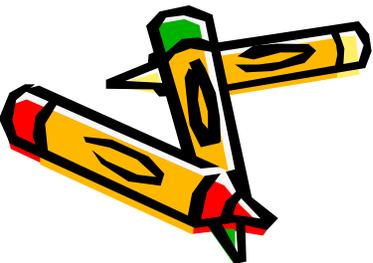
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Interpersonal Skills

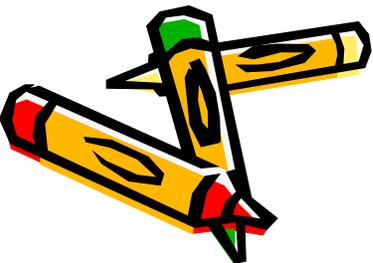
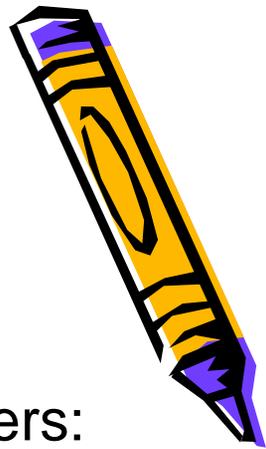


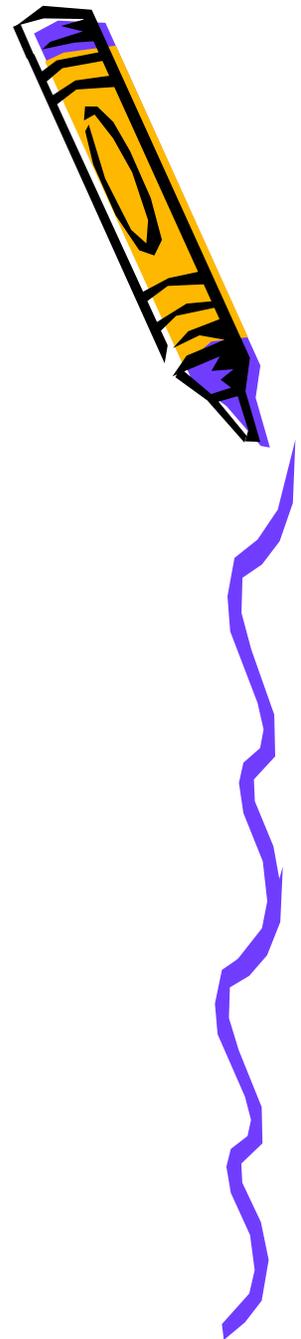
- Parent Characteristics
 - Overcome past negative school experiences which may negatively impact parent-teacher relationships.
 - Be proactive. Address your concerns to teachers before it is too late. The earlier you identify a problem, the easier it is to address.
 - Be organized. Make checklists of concerns or areas of discussion.
 - Prior to meeting with teachers, ask for samples of your child's work to review.
 - Ask teachers if a parent/guardian visitation day is available to observe your child.
 - Use appropriate language and non-threatening tones.
 - Set aside outside problems you may be having (i.e., work stress) that may affect communication during parent/teacher interaction.



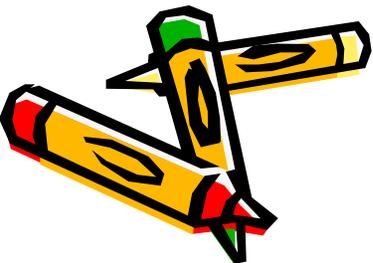
Interpersonal Skills

- Use SOLER technique when speaking with teachers: Square posture, Open position, Lean towards the other, Eye contact, and Relaxed position.
- Listen and empathize. Listening carefully is the easiest way to discover the real issues of what is going on.
- Be open and set aside assumptions, preconceptions, and prejudices.
- Stay positive and assume the best until proven otherwise.
- Be flexible in trying to accommodate each other.

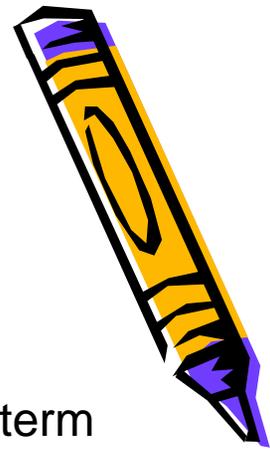




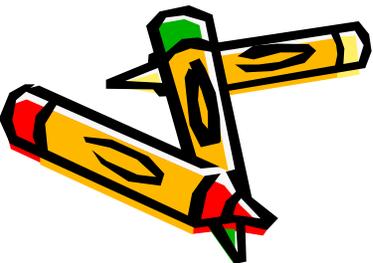
Understanding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)



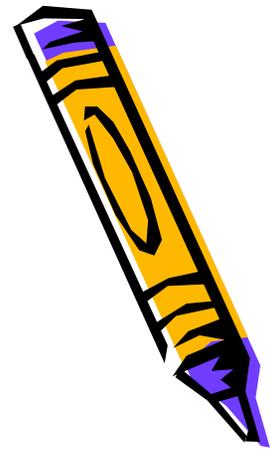
What is an IEP?



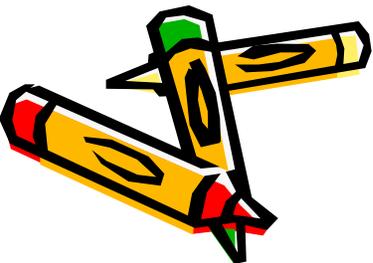
- Used for special educational planning and ensures positive long-term outcomes for students with disabilities.
- This is a blueprint of the major educational goals for your child.
- A legal document that describes a student's instructional needs and identifies the special education services the school will provide to meet those needs.
- Schools are required to comply with all conditions of the IEP because this is a legal document.
- Each IEP is individualized and must be based on the unique strengths and needs of the child.
- In effect for a specified period (currently 1 year) – Can be reviewed or revised earlier at the school's requirement or your request.



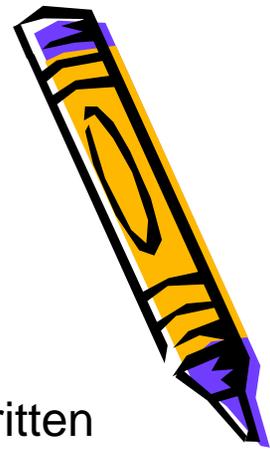
Laws Regarding IEP's



- Laws of the IEP are revised periodically.
- Each state has it's own set of regulations.
- Regulations also available from your state department of education.
- You and your child have rights and protections under federal and state law even if your child does not have an IEP.
- This includes procedural safeguards which include: protections, assurance of confidentiality, and guarantees informed parent consent prior to any special education service or placement.



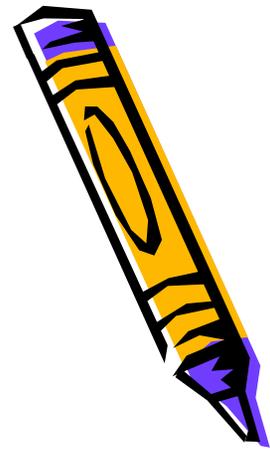
Safeguards Relevant to IEP Meetings



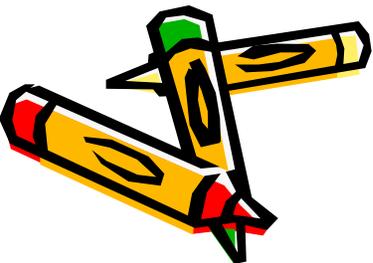
- Written Notice: This ensures that the school provides you with written notice whenever the school plans to conduct an evaluation or re-evaluation, develop an IEP, or change your child's placement.
- Parental Consent: The school must obtain your informed consent to conduct an initial evaluation or re-evaluation or provide initial special education services.
- Access to Educational Records: You are always entitled to view your child's educational records.
- Due Process Hearing: You have the right to a hearing when you are unable to resolve a disagreement with the school regarding your child's services or placement.
- Mediation: Some states have mediation procedures to resolve disputes before moving to a formal due process hearing.



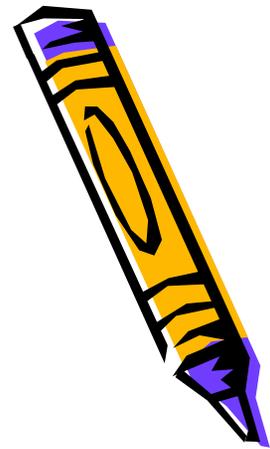
Other Legal Issues & Rights of Parents



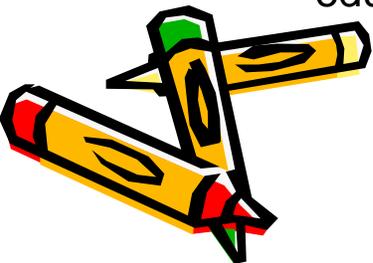
- Parents: Must be provided the opportunity to be involved in every phase of child's education
- Persons acting as parents: Can carry out rights and responsibilities given to parents under IDEA unless state appointed representative is guardian.
- Surrogates: Person appointed to represent child in matters related only to identification, evaluation, and placement of child needing special education. Must be appointed if no parent is identified.



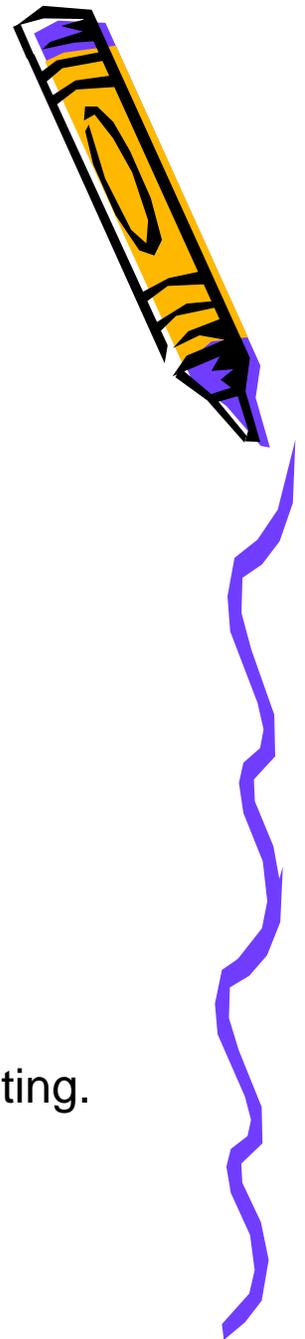
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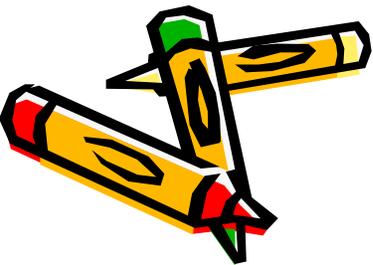
- Student records:
 - Access: Each school must allow parents and representatives to review and amend child's records
 - Confidentiality: Student records must remain confidential and school staff must receive training in record keeping. Age limit for transfer of records is different for students of special needs (Permission granted by state law and not age of 18)
 - Directory of Information: Schools may release information regarding students without written consent when:
 - Parents have been advised
 - Parents have reasonable time to object
 - Public Notice: Schools must provide parents with a published or announced notice of school policies and parental rights regarding education records.



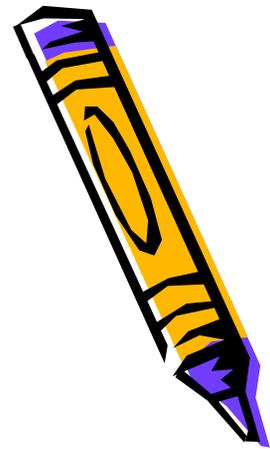
Who Participates in an IEP Meeting?



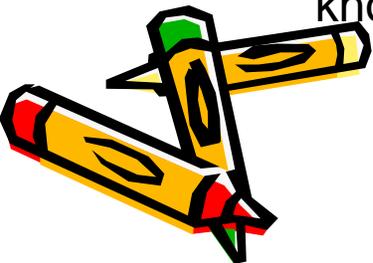
- Developed by a team that includes:
 - Parents
 - Student (when appropriate)
 - Special education teacher
 - General education teacher
 - Administrator
- Law requires a student to have access to a general education curriculum; thus, it is required that one of the student's general education teachers be present.
- Parents have the right to invite anyone to the meeting.
- The district may invite others, only if they notify the parents in writing.



Purpose of an IEP

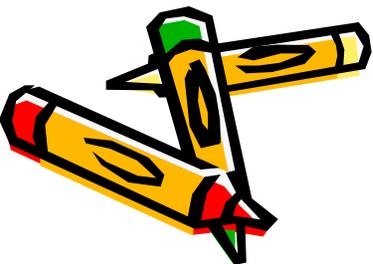
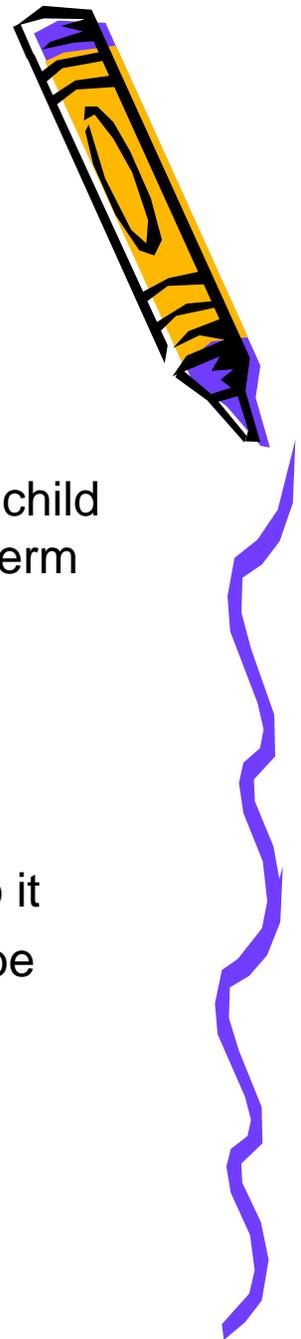


- Three things the IEP should do:
 - Special Education Services: The team should determine what special education services your child requires.
 - Related Services: The IEP should contain a listing of related services, which is those services required to help your child benefit from special education such as: transportation, physical therapy, and speech therapy.
 - *These supports are available to your child at the school's expense only if necessary to benefit from special education.
 - Adoptions or modifications: Adoptions are physical aspects of the setting and modifications are changes in the way material is presented or the way children are required to demonstrate their knowledge.

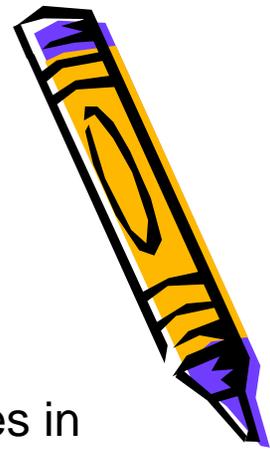


The Instructional Plan

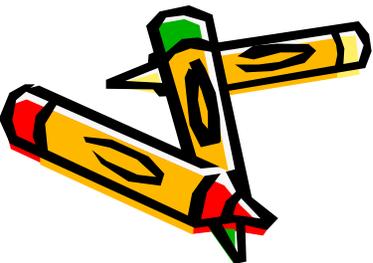
- Begins with the description of your child's present educational performance in each area related to the disability.
- Long-term Goals: A description of what the team would like your child to do by the end of the year. Each long-term goal has two short-term objectives.
- Short-term Objectives: Must be specific and do the following –
 - State exactly what your child should do
 - State exactly under what conditions your child should do it
 - State exactly at what level of proficiency your child should do it
 - State exactly how frequently that level of proficiency should be achieved.



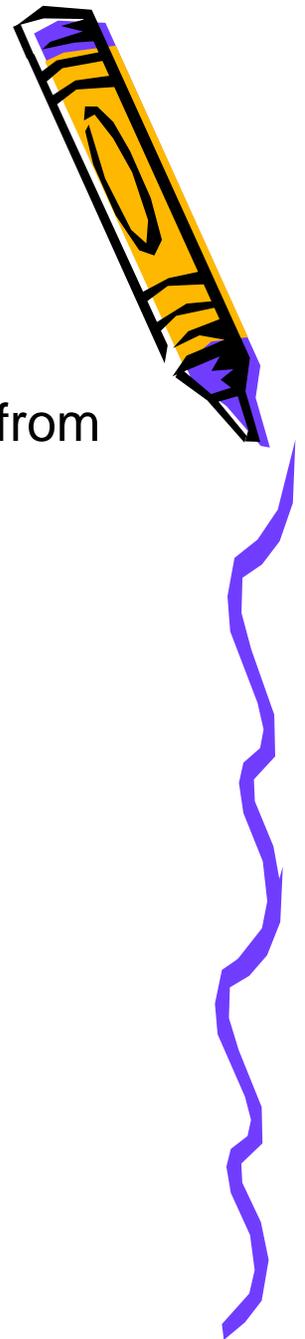
Special Education Placement



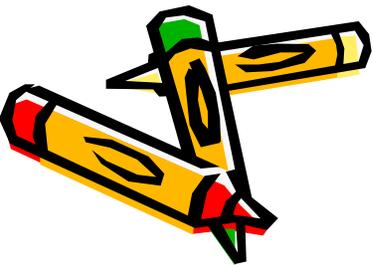
- “According to federal law, your child should receive those services in the Least Restrictive Environment, which means the general education setting, unless owing to the severity of the disability, your child can not benefit from special education services provided in the general education setting, even with the use of supplementary aids and services”.
 - It is inappropriate for team members to make decisions about the placement before the team meeting.
 - If a child is removed from a general education setting, the removal must be justified in writing by the IEP.
 - Sometimes, extended school year services may be required.
 - Placement is the last step in the development of the IEP.



Let's see what you know!

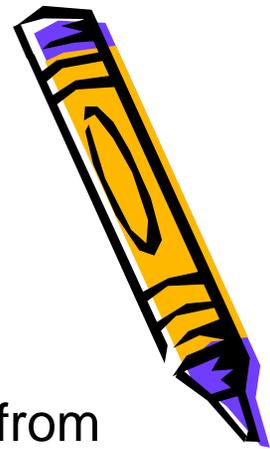


- Parent's should stay involved in their children's education from preschool through high school.
 - a) True
 - b) False
- Which of the following are safeguards relevant to IEP meetings?
 - a) Written Notice
 - b) Parental Consent
 - c) Access to educational records
 - d) All of the above

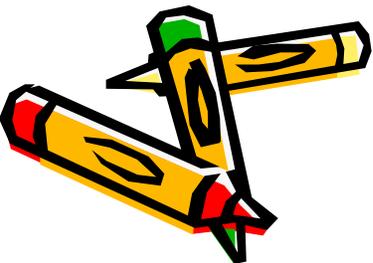


Check your answers!

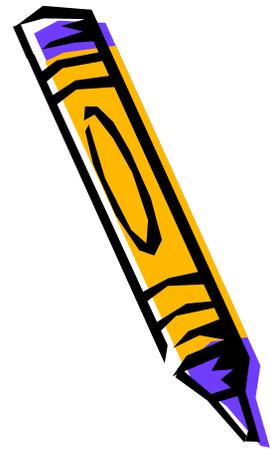
(correct answers are italicized)



- Parent's should stay involved in their children's education from preschool through high school.
 - a) ***True***
 - b) False
- Which of the following are safeguards relevant to IEP meetings?
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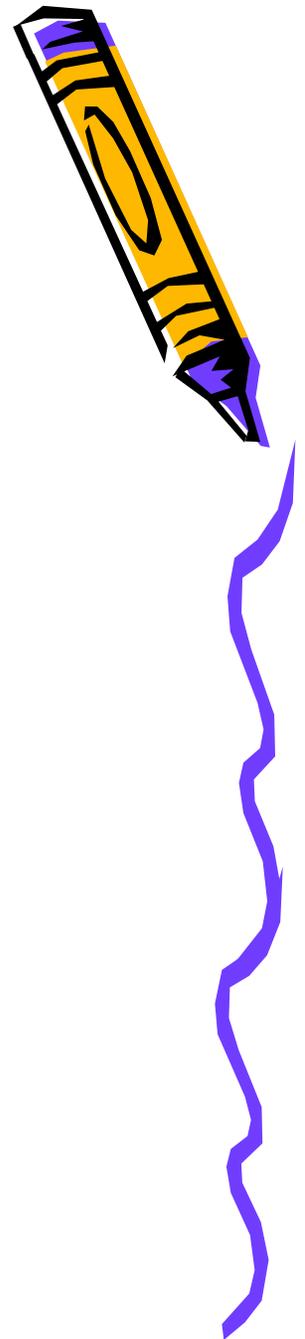
Tips for Parents



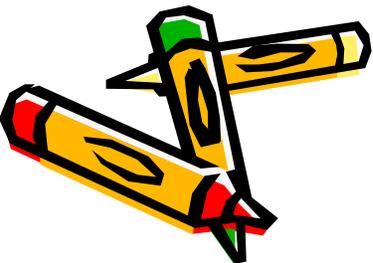
- Ask questions whenever clarification is needed.
- Ask for additional time to review the information.
- Consultation with an advocate may be helpful.
- Schools are not allowed to set time limits on IEP's.
 - If a meeting can not be completed, the team must schedule additional time to complete the IEP.
- The written IEP should be completed during the meeting.
 - School personnel, including teachers and administrators, should not come to the meeting with a finalized document.
- As a parent, you are guaranteed the right to participate in the development of the IEP.



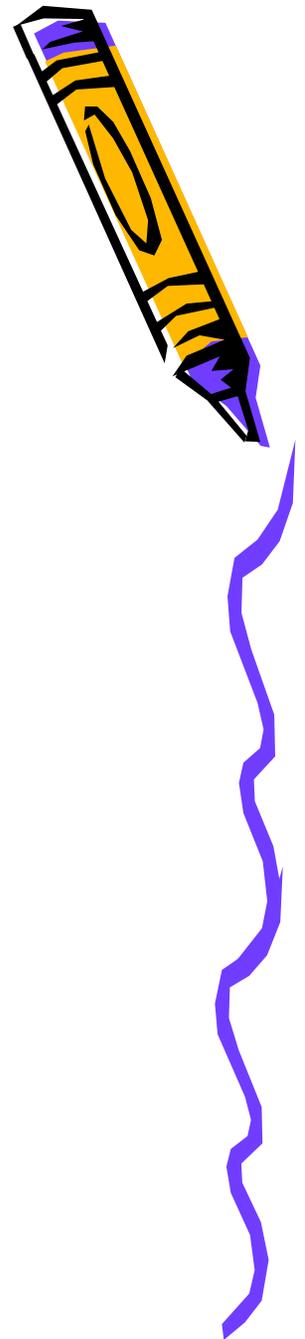
MDCPS Efforts



- Parent Resource Centers (PRC)
 - Provide families and students with resource materials and curriculum support for assisting with at-home learning
 - For list of PRCs:
http://www.dadeschools.net/features/parent_res_guide.pdf
- Parent Academy 305-995-2680
 - Helps parents understand/navigate MDCPS' school
- Bilingual Parent Outreach: 305-995- 1920.
<http://bilingual.dadeschools.net/BEWL/parent.asp>.



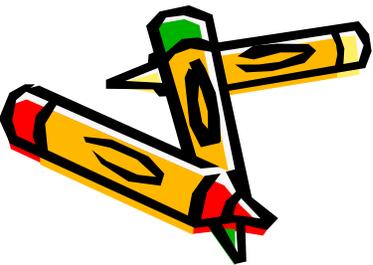
MCPS Office of Parental Involvement



- Parents have the opportunity to join a variety of groups including:
 - The Family and Community Advisory Committee
 - The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
 - Parent Leadership Council

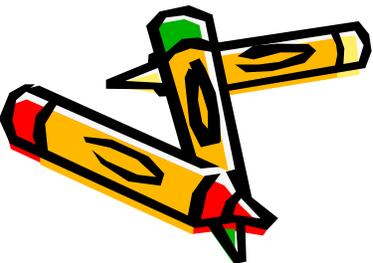
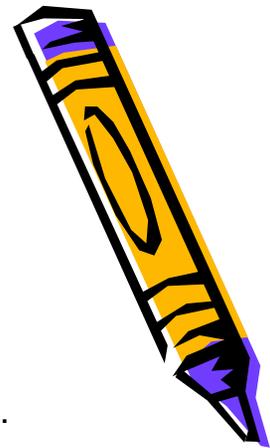
Please contact:

Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Office of Parental Involvement (OPI)
School Board Administration Building
1450 NE Second Avenue, Suite #216
Miami, Florida 33132
Phone: 305-995-1233
Fax: 305-995-4679



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